



Congressman Todd Tiahrt's U.S. Capitol Update

October 10, 2003

War on Terrorism Supplemental Spending Bill

The House Appropriations Committee (HAC) this week acted on President Bush's \$87 billion supplemental request for the war on terrorism. The HAC reduced the spending bill by approximately \$100 million and shifted some of the spending priorities. The vast majority of the spending in this bill (\$65 billion) goes directly to national defense expenditures like operations and maintenance costs for our military. Approximately \$19 billion will go toward relief and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and the remaining \$1 billion will be used in Afghanistan.

We increased funds for force protection and quality of life issues, such as the purchase of special armor plate inserts and money to contract for the clearing of unexploded ordinance. The bill provides funding for the contracting of civilian security guards to replace reservists currently performing these duties at Army installations. The Army has indicated this provision would allow 7,000 to 10,000 reservists to come home.

The measure, as passed by the HAC, includes a proposal that authorizes continued payment of per diem for travel of family members of military personnel who are ill or injured as a result of active duty service. It also includes a provision to continue the increased monthly rate of Imminent Danger Pay and Family Separation Allowances through the end of FY 2004. There are numerous other provisions in the bill that help our troops, who continue to serve this nation with great honor and commitment.

767 Tanker Lease Amendment

During debate over the war supplemental, an amendment was added that calls for a Defense Department study of alternatives for the current fleet of KC-135 Air Refueling Tankers. The study must be completed within 30 days of enactment of the law. This amendment is an attempt to speed up the 767 Tanker Lease process, and it passed overwhelmingly.

The Kay Report

While it has been reported in numerous ways, depending on which media source you watch or listen to, David Kay's report to Congress clearly indicates that Saddam Hussein was in violation of United Nations resolutions related to weapons of mass destruction. Kay and the experts of the Iraq Survey Group provided information confirming that Saddam had networks of laboratories for conducting chemical-biological weapons research. We already know Saddam used those types of weapons on Iranians and the people of his own country. There should be no question that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. I believe we do need to know what happened to them, however, and I look forward to Kay's next report.

Appropriations Process

Although Fiscal Year 2004 started October 1, only three of 13 appropriations bills have passed Congress. The House passed all 13 bills in early September, the Senate must still approve six of the bills and four of the bills are currently in conference committee. I am hopeful that we will be able to move forward and have all of these bills completed by the end of October. We are currently funding the government under a "Continuing Resolution" that spends approximately the same amount of money as the previous year's spending measure. It is the CR that keeps government benefits like Social Security and Medicare checks coming and the national parks open.